



WESTBOURNE COMMUNITY TRUST

Westbourne Community Trust

AGM Progress Report 2020 to 2021

Background to the Trust

Westbourne Community Trust (WCT) was formed by a group of local residents in November 2018 as a community land trust whose main purpose is to deliver affordable housing within the Parish and other community projects that will make the Parish a better place to live. Forming the Trust was considered a necessary response to criticisms about the lack of affordable housing in the Neighbourhood Plan when it was considered by a Government Inspector in a public hearing in 2017. The Neighbourhood Plan has finally been approved and adopted in September this year and is now official planning policy for the Parish as part of the Chichester Local Plan.

Although the Trust is a key partner organisation of Westbourne Parish Council (WPC) it operates independently. However, there are WPC representatives on the board of trustees.

The membership of WCT within the local community, is now 109, all of whom have purchased a minimum of a £1 share. Some have purchased additional shares and or made cash donations to support the work of the Trust.

New members are always welcome to join the Trust, especially those who are willing to get involved in its work and potentially have skills to contribute as a trustee. The regulatory body for WCT is the Financial Conduct Authority and the Trust is registered with that body as a community benefit society with charitable status. If you want to find out more about the Trust and become a member you can do this on the Trust's website

www.westbournecommunitytrust.org

Like many community organisations the Trust has found that its normal activities have been affected by the Covid pandemic. Meetings which are normally held every 2 months have continued to take place, but they have mostly been held on Zoom. Whilst this has enabled us to continue to progress our work it not as satisfactory as meeting face to face and it has inevitably affected progress on our key project to deliver affordable housing and other improvements on the land to the rear of 30 to 56 Mill Road.

The Annual Accounts for 2020/21

The Trust's appointed accountants are Morris Crocker of North Street, Havant. They have produced and certified the Annual Accounts for 2020/21. The accounts have been published on the Trust's website and will be considered for adoption at the Annual General Meeting on 2nd December 2021.

Mill Road Affordable Housing Project Update

At the last AGM in December 2020, the Trust was able to report that a substantial amount of work had been undertaken in support of the planning application which had been submitted in April 2020. By that time all the technical work had been completed and examined by the Chichester planners and found to be satisfactory apart from one new issue that had only recently been identified as a requirement. That issue had been raised by Natural England as part of the planning consultation on the application and related to Nitrate Mitigation. This now affects all new residential development where the surface and waste water drains ultimately into the Solent. As a result of that new requirement the Trust had to assess the total nitrate emissions from the proposed development and identify an appropriate sized area of agricultural land that could be taken out of agricultural use and planted with trees. This would in effect prevent nitrate emissions of an equivalent amount to mitigate the emissions anticipated from the proposed residential development. This would make the proposal "nitrate neutral".

The Trust then undertook a search for suitable land in the area around Westbourne. Several landowners were approached. Eventually a solution was found by agreeing with a local agricultural landowner that a portion of land on the farm could be set aside for tree planting. The details of the mitigation scheme were submitted to Chichester District Council and Natural England and were considered to be acceptable in April 2021.

So, with this matter now resolved the Trust was advised by Chichester District Council planners that they have all the relevant information needed to make a decision and that they are minded to approve the application. However, before a decision can be finally made it is necessary for a legal agreement to be prepared that would be attached to the grant of planning permission and the land must be transferred to the ownership of the Trust from the District Council. The legal agreement will ensure amongst other things that the site can only be developed for socially rented affordable housing and that the nitrate mitigation scheme described above is properly carried out.

Since April 2021 work on completing the legal agreement and setting up the land transfer has been continuing. The impact of Covid on the resources available at Chichester District Council to deal with the work has been a delaying factor. It now seems that this work is reaching a conclusion. The Trust's solicitors are finalising the terms of the legal agreement and the land transfer. It is expected that a planning permission can be issued shortly.

Preparing for Development on Site

Now that the position with the planning application is clear and reaching a positive outcome, the Trust is turning its attention to how the construction work can be undertaken and funded.

The first step in this work has been to commission a review of the costs of the scheme taking into account the current market conditions and the implications of the various additional elements in the scheme that were introduced during the planning process.

The Trust had already retained the services of Welling, a reputable firm of Quantity Surveyors, to make an assessment of the overall cost of the project during the earliest stages of preparing the design of the scheme. This company has now revised the costs taking into account the additional requirements that have arisen from the planning process and current market conditions. So, we now have an improved understanding of the current likely cost of the scheme and therefore how much funding we need to raise.

We have also undertaken a review of the preparatory work that needs to be undertaken after the granting of planning permission and before construction can be started on site. This work includes the following key requirements

- Specification of the detailed design requirements for the construction of the new houses
- Detailed design of the drainage system for foul sewage to the existing main drains in Mill Road
- Structural design of foundations
- Detailed design of the construction of the access roads and parking provision including the additional off street parking to be provided in Mill Road
- Detailed design and arrangements for the temporary construction vehicle access from Foxbury Lane to the site
- An archaeological assessment of the site
- Design of the renewable energy system requirements and space heating system for the new houses
- Commencement of a competitive procurement/tendering process with potential construction companies qualified to build the houses so that a competent contractor can be selected

Quotations have been secured to undertake the pre-construction work so that we are ready to commission this as soon as planning permission is issued.

Funding for the Project

The Trust is applying for revenue funding from Homes England and Chichester District Council to assist in completing the post planning permission and pre-construction work mentioned above. The outcome of bids for this funding is expected to be received shortly.

In addition to this revenue funding we are preparing to secure the capital funding needed to build the houses and the additional associated community benefits as described in more detail below. The Trust anticipates that significant contributions will be made available in the form of grant funding from the following organisations.

- Homes England – Affordable Homes Programme 2021 – 2026
- Chichester District Council – Community Led Affordable Housing Fund
- Chichester District Council – S106 Developer Contributions Fund
- South Downs National Park Authority – Community Led Affordable Housing Fund
- Westbourne Parish Council

The Trust has entered into discussions with each of the above funding organisations to establish that it is eligible to receive funding and is currently preparing to make applications for capital grant funding to each of them.

There are also a number of charitable funders or specialist funding organisations that will consider bids from organisations like Westbourne Community Trust. These will be approached for funding in relation to the community elements of the scheme such as the play equipment and sports elements and the allotments/Parish Council storage building.

In addition to the funding sources mentioned above the Trust will have an assured income from the rental stream of the proposed affordable housing once it is completed and occupied. The value of this rental income net of management and overhead costs will be available to service a loan from a bank or similar financial institution. The Trust will be approaching appropriate organisations to secure a loan that will be sufficient to close the gap between the total cost of the scheme and the amount of funding that is likely to be raised in direct grants from the organisations mentioned above.

There remains a significant amount of work to be undertaken but this work is well advanced. The Trust remains confident that the project is financially viable and can be delivered successfully. In general terms the current programme is as follows.

Anticipated Programme for Mill Road Affordable Housing Project

July – Nov 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to review costs • Determine approach to procurement • Prepare for funding bids and loan finance • Complete S106 Agreement, secure planning permission and land transfer from Chichester DC • Complete all pre-construction design / specification work • Prepare tendering documentation
Nov 21 – January 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit funding bids / loan application

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence competitive tendering process • Select contractor for design and build contract • Secure commitment from funders for all necessary funding to implement the scheme • Finalise leasing and related arrangements with Parish Council in relation to residual park area
January to March 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise arrangements for commencement of construction
April/May 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated start of construction
April to June 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated completion of construction

Summary of the Scheme

The project that the Trust proposes to carry out is more than just an affordable housing scheme. We always wanted to include a wider range of community projects that would be of benefit to the local community. The community consultation that we undertook, prior to submitting our planning application in April 2021, encouraged us to broaden the scope of the project to bring about benefits for; the users of the park, the Allotment Association, the Parish Council, the Westbourne Primary School and the residents of Mill Road. The project that we are now preparing to take forward is essentially as submitted to the Council back in March 2020. There are some minor amendments to take into account the Council's requirements, but all of the key features of the scheme remain and are as set out below.

- 12 new affordable homes to rent to local people including, two 3-bed homes, four 2-bed homes, six 1-bed homes,
- Appropriate parking space and internal amenity space for those homes
- Parking for the allotments and users of the park
- New off-street parking spaces on Mill Road to ease parking congestion
- New play equipment to replace the existing outdated equipment
- A new multi-use games area (MUGA) to replace the existing sports court
- Replacement of the skatepark
- A new jogging track around the park
- A new storage unit to be provided for the Allotment Association and the Parish Council which will include a WC and kitchen facility for the exclusive use of the Allotment Association
- New fencing along the boundary to the allotment site

- A new pedestrian footpath link across the park directly in to the Westbourne Primary School playground
- Extensive off-site tree planting on land to the north of the site to provide screening from the open countryside
- A temporary access for construction traffic on land to the north of the site, direct from Foxbury Lane, to avoid congestion in Mill Road
- Nature conservation features to enhance bio-diversity

You can see the current site layout plan at this link <https://bit.ly/3q5GINc> or you can see all the details of the planning application at this link <https://bit.ly/3w56rGJ>.

Conclusion

So, although there have been some delays and frustrations, and there may be more to come, the Trust is moving closer to delivering its first major project on the land at Mill Road. We would like to thank all our members for their continuing support and we hope to be able to start work on site next year. It's an exciting prospect!

Frank Campbell

Chair of Westbourne Community Trust

November 2021